

THE FAITHFUL MINISTERS OF JESUS CHRIST
REWARDED.

A

S E R M O N,

DELIVERED AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. AZEL BACKUS,

TO THE

PASTORAL CARE

OF THE

CHURCH IN BETHLEM,

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AN
ORDINATION SERMON.

JOHN IV. 36.

AND he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth, and he that reapeth, may rejoice together.

JESUS CHRIST, as he was passing through Samaria, in the course of his public ministry, arrived at Sychar about the middle of the day, and sat down by Jacob's well. Here his disciples left him, and went among the neighbouring inhabitants to purchase food. A woman belonging to the place came out to the well to draw water: Christ enters into discourse with her, convinces her of sin, and reveals himself to her as the Messiah. Her heart was full, she leaves her water-pot, hastens into the city, and addresses the citizens in a pressing manner, "Come see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the CHRIST?" A crowd soon gathered round the extraordinary person at the well, and many believed on him. Christ's disciples, on their return from the city, marvelled at the conduct of their Lord in entering into discourse with a woman of Samaria. A bitter animosity had subsisted between the Jews and Samaritans for many ages, originating in differences of a religious nature. To expect a sudden complete removal of long prejudices of this class, is calculating too high for the attainments of the best of men in the present world.

ON the departure of the woman, the disciples invited their Master to refresh himself with the food which they had procured. Christ replies to their invitation by pointing them to objects which lay much nearer his heart than the refreshment of his body,—“My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.” He proceeds to illustrate the ingathering of souls in Samaria now at hand,

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and the future success of his disciples in the same good work in that and many other places, by the literal harvest, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest." In the text and the two following verses, he introduces considerations which tended not only to encourage their hopes, and awaken their diligence and zeal; but also to check their pride. Nothing could be more seasonable, since they were to be succeeded beyond any of the public teachers of former times; as we find they were, after the Holy Ghost descended upon them in the day of Pentecost. However, they did but *reap* what the Patriarchs, the Prophets, John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ had *sowed*: *Other men laboured and they entered into their labours*. In the text, while they are comforted with the promise of life eternal, they are told that their reward would be no other than that of the faithful ones who sowed the seed which they were to reap; *that both he that soweth, and he that reapeth, might rejoice together*. Hence we are led to conclude,—That the labours of all the ministers of Jesus Christ tend to the advancement of his kingdom;—that they ought to be more engaged for this than for their particular success;—and that the future reward will be proportioned to their fidelity.

I. THE labours of all the ministers of Jesus Christ tend to the advancement of his kingdom.

CHRIST is made head over all things to the church, and will render every event subservient to the work which he is carrying on in the world. Even the wrath of man praises God, while the agent "meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so," but with wicked intentions is accomplishing what God's mind and counsel had before determined to be done; as did Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, in putting the Saviour to an ignominious death.

THE aim of all good men is to advance the kingdom of the Redeemer. Among the friends of Christ some hold a higher and some a lower rank in his family, according to their gifts, and the stations which they are called to fill. Public teachers are set in the most distinguished place in the church, and

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are charged by the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls to feed the flock of God, to commit the ministry to able and faithful men, to defend the truth against its adversaries, and to preach the gospel to every creature. Labouring within the extent of their commission, they are workers together with God, and the word spoken by them is clothed with divine authority. All that they speak or do by God's direction will be owned by him, nor will he suffer any of their words to fall to the ground. Their hearers may remain stupid or vitious, but the supreme object of their ministry will not be lost. God's word will not return to him void, but it shall accomplish his pleasure, and shall prosper in the thing whereto he sent it. Displays of mercy or wrath, whether in the present or future world, promote the ultimate design of the Most High, the glory of his own name. This object was uppermost in Christ's heart through his whole state of humiliation. When the time of his death drew near he prayed, "Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Every faithful minister of the gospel hath a portion of the same spirit with his Master. In proportion to his degree of holiness, it is his chief aim to promote the interest of God's moral kingdom, while he makes it as his meat and drink to do the will of his Lord, who placed him in the vineyard. "Now thanks be unto God," saith the Apostle Paul, "which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the favour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish."

THE prosperity of the church in the present world is promoted by the services of those who are pastors after God's own heart. We have no reason to conclude that any of them spend their strength without some present success: Wherever they are received, they are, no doubt, constantly promoting the religious improvement of some of their hearers. Visible success attends the ministry of some so soon as they enter on their work; a few, after spending many years in the vineyard, hear for the first time a general enquiry among the people of their charge, "What must I do to be saved?" And though many pass through life with-

not seeing much fruit from their counsels and warnings, yet the seed sown by them may spring up in a glorious harvest after they are gathered to their fathers.

IMPROVEMENTS in knowledge in any advanced period of the world, are much indebted to the exertions and discoveries of former generations. A cast may be given to the human mind favourable to free enquiry and enlargement, long before its effects appear; an useful hint may be started and not come into general notice for ages: But whenever the mind acquires energy enough to show its predisposition, or to pursue the path which had been struck out, we always recur to the first authors, and give them a large share of the praise. We may apply these observations to the clearing of evangelical truth from hurtful errors, and displaying it before the world in its native charms. The Reformation from Popery is one of the most important events which has happened since the days of inspiration. Various things prepared the way for setting bounds to the ghostly dominion of the Roman Pontiff, and the revival of a purer religion. Among these are to be enumerated the writings of *Wickliff*, in the fourteenth century, and the labours and patient sufferings of good men before his time, and in the century following. In the sixteenth arose *Luther*, *Zuingle*, *Calvin*, and other eminent Reformers, and reaped what their predecessors had been sowing for many hundred years before their time. When these great and pious men lived, the time had come, and all things were made ready by Providence, to give a shock to the Romish hierarchy; from which it has not recovered to this day. They could not attribute their success to their abilities or zeal, for, like all their brethren in the midnight darkness of the christian church, they were but earthen vessels, to whom the preaching of the gospel was committed, that the excellency of the power might be of God and not of man.

THE scriptures give us abundant reason to believe, that the religion of Jesus will have a much more extensive spread in the latter day, than it has ever yet had in the world. Light and truth will be the means used in gathering this glorious harvest. Knowledge will be greatly increased, while the everlasting gospel will be preached to every na-

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tion, kindred and tongue. The remarkable degree of knowledge which shall then fill the earth, will be in a great measure owing to the concurrence of events, which had been pointing toward this period from the day when redeeming love first dawned upon the world. All the faithful, from the time of Adam, will rejoice together in their common success, when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ."

II. THE ministers of Jesus Christ ought to be more engaged for the advancement of his kingdom, than for their particular success.

THE general good of Christ's kingdom is of infinitely greater importance than the success of an individual minister: And hence it must be evident, that all who have that affection which regards objects according to their worth, will consent to give up a less good when it cannot be obtained consistently with a greater. Upon this foundation rests the doctrine of self-denial, so essential to the christian and ministerial character. The highest good of God's moral kingdom is not confined to the life of one man, but extends from the creation to the end of the world, and is of equal duration with eternity. A minister whose heart is formed on this large scale, will be much more concerned about his duty, than his particular success. He will be in earnest to labor in the vast field which is before him, while he resigns to the will of divine sovereignty whether he, or some other person who shall come after him, shall reap what he had sowed.

If a minister of the gospel should indulge a greater concern for his particular success, than for the advancement of Christ's kingdom at large, dangerous consequences would follow. Such are the best of men in this imperfect state, that they are liable to be lifted up with pride, when their endeavours to promote any important interest are rendered effectual. What scope would be given to pride, if they were encouraged in judging of themselves by the efficacy of the means employed by them? Again, if personal success might rise above every other consideration in their minds, there would be nothing in many cases to prevent their fall.

ing into despair. To what refuge could they flee in a day of general apostacy, or when the word spoken by them becomes apparently a favour of death unto death? Nothing could remain for their consolation or hope, but they might with propriety pray for death with Elijah, and join with Jeremiah in cursing the day wherein they were born. But they who speak in the name of the Lord, can never be justified in imitating those prophets in their desponding hours, since the kingdom of Christ shall finally triumph, and their endeavours for its advancement will contribute to its glory.

It can be no just objection to what has been said, that a christian pastor is required to have regard to the state of a particular people, in determining to what part of the vineyard to confine his principal ministrations. He must learn his duty in this case by consulting his own abilities, and the pointings of divine providence. All who have been called of God into the sacred office, have not been equally qualified for every place, not even in the days when men were miraculously endowed with ministerial gifts. Paul was better qualified than John to meet the encounter of the philosophers of Athens. The openings in providence, in connection with personal qualifications, will lead the prayerful teacher to a safe conclusion, in what place there is the fairest prospect of promoting the general good of the cause in which he is embarked. Of this general good he is never to lose sight; nor can any engagements which he may form, bind him to act against his supreme obligations to the Head of the church. And therefore, if on trial in a particular congregation, the people will not receive him nor hear his words, he is countenanced by apostolic example, and commanded by Christ, to depart from them. It is granted that the souls of the people thus left may be of equal worth, separately considered, with the souls of those who will receive a faithful minister; but the good of Christ's kingdom at large overbalances that consideration, and requires that he turn from the open despisers of the gospel, and speak to them no more. This is perfectly consistent with that charity which sets general above private good, and is to be considered as exemplifying rather than counteracting the spirit of christianity.

THE removal of a minister from a lower to a higher sphere of usefulness, is but a natural consequence of the principal design of instituting all classes of public teachers which have ever been in the church—"The edifying of the body of Christ." Removals may take place merely on this ground, unless some particular prohibition can be pointed out in the holy scriptures.

WHEREVER christian ministers are called to exercise their office, the promoting of Christ's kingdom claims their chief regard. To this they are bound to devote themselves, counting nothing dear to them, that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Governed by such motives they have every encouragement to be diligent and unwearied in their work: As may further appear by considering,

III. THAT the future reward will be proportioned to their fidelity.

NOTHING will be rewarded in the day of retribution but character: Faithfulness forms the character, and hence it must be that which will evidence any man's title to the tree of life.

THERE hath no promise been made to any uninspired man that he shall be successful in converting souls to Christ; but the scriptures abound with promises of a gracious reward to all the faithful. The words of the Great Prophet of the church in the xlixth chapter of Isaiah, are full of consolation to all the faithful ministers of the gospel, in the most discouraging seasons: "Then I said I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.—Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength." Christ, in his discourse on the improvement of the talents in Matth. xxvth, proportions the future reward to past fidelity. Paul, in the third chapter of his first Epistle to the church at Corinth, applies the same ge-

neral subject to ministers of the gospel in particular: "He that planteth, and he that watereth are one, and every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour."

THE promise of a distinguished reward to those "who turn many to righteousness," proceeds on the ground of great faithfulness in the instruments. Though we find instances in sacred history of able and zealous public teachers who had but little success through their lives, yet we find none remarkably succeeded who were not eminent for their fidelity. This is the reason why a crown of superior lustre becomes the portion of those who, by God's blessing, save many souls from eternal death. In this connection it is easy to see why the Apostle Paul should speak of those who were converted to the faith by his ministry, as his "crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming."

IMPROVEMENT.

ON a review of the present subject, it appears that humility is of great importance in the ministers of the gospel. With the lowest member of the church, they are wholly dependent on divine grace. The spirit of humility will lead them to adopt the language of the chief of the Apostles, "who is sufficient for these things?" The same temper will influence them to acknowledge God in their studies, and public services. The Author of the human mind can, by a small incident, lead it into a train of most enlightening and useful thoughts. God hath ever heard the desire of the humble, and promiseth to guide the meek in judgment. That minister who is puffed up with his knowledge, grieves the Holy Spirit, and provokes him to withdraw. Awful effects will follow: He will be in danger of scandalizing his profession, and the gospel, by an immoral life; or pride may prompt him to exercise himself in things too high for him, to rest in mere speculation, or to look down with contempt on the attainments of other persons or ages. The meek and humble spirit of the gospel, will prove the only

effectual security against being lost in the mazes of error, and against attributing personal improvements or success to fancied superior abilities or goodness. The minister who is clothed with humility, will bless God for the helps which he derives from the labours of good men who lived before him, and will think himself honoured in reaping what others have sowed; he will not think that every thing great in the church of God must be confined to the period when he is on the stage, but will cheerfully submit to the Great Lord of all to promote his kingdom in his own time and way.

AGAIN, We may infer that there is ample room for diligence in the work of the gospel ministry.

IN Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, will bring forth out of these treasures things new and old. The revelation which we enjoy opens a wide field for our contemplation. The truths of christianity are simple and sublime, and while they descend to the lowest capacity, they rise infinitely above the comprehension of the most enlarged created mind. The accomplishment of many predictions, since the canon of scripture was completed, has thrown much light upon the sacred writings. There are prophecies fulfilling at the present time, and others remain to be unfolded. These considerations are well suited to enlighten and establish christians in the faith, and to silence the avowed enemies of the cross.

WE are under great obligations to bless God, that we live at so remote a period of the christian dispensation; that so many burning and shining lights have been raised up in the church since inspiration ceased; and that we may derive great benefit from their writings, by which they being dead yet speak to the living. Shall we sit idle with so many helps in our hands? To boast of new discoveries in subjects more fully discussed before our time than since, would bring us into contempt with all men of information: On the other hand, should we push our enquiries into the things which are revealed, further than any who have gone before us, we shall deserve praise. The man who takes a step in knowledge beyond the rest of the world, is not on that account

chargeable with insulting the ashes of his fathers, but is to be considered as evidencing that he reveres the memories of those who laid the foundation for his improvements.

As faithful stewards of the mysteries of God, we must daily discover the worth and extent of that benevolent system, which we are called to study and explain. In proportion to our prayerful diligence in this good work, our minds will be more and more animated in prospect of the immense treasures before us.

On a survey of our duty as watchmen, a croud of motives urges us on to the greatest diligence and zeal in the duties of our station. We watch for souls as those who must render an account unto God. The souls of our charge are deeply interested in our ministry. Effects will flow from it which will reach to generations yet unborn, to the second coming of Jesus Christ, and to the endless duration of future rewards and punishments.

My Fathers and Brethren in the Ministry,

WHEN we consider the nature of that holy religion which we are called to preach, and the promises and predictions with which it abounds, we have every encouragement to be active and zealous in our work. The spirit of pure benevolence which runs through the sacred writings, possesses an inimitable beauty, and lays the only foundation for perfect harmony and enjoyment among intelligent beings. This unites the faithful of all ages to the kingdom of God, and to each other. With what holy ardor must we rise to our work, when we contemplate the glories of the Redeemer's kingdom, the worth of the soul, and the promised reward? In the future meeting in heaven love will glow from each breast, and join the common theme of praise, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

WE are on the stage in one of the most eventful periods the world ever saw. The spirit of free enquiry which was

roused a few centuries ago, after slumbering a thousand years, has of late made an amazing progress. Civil and ecclesiastical tyranny have received a fatal wound, and we hope will soon be banished from the earth. The world is swiftly preparing for the general spread of light and truth, as predicted long ago in the oracles of God. An acquaintance with human nature, and the history of the church, will not permit us to look for the accomplishment of Zion's hopes, without great convulsions in the kingdoms of the world. Great abuses of reason and the passions in matters of religion are also to be expected, before Jerusalem shall become the joy of the whole earth. It is of the highest importance that spiritual guides know the sources of truth, be able to stand forth in its defence, and possess all the requisite abilities to recommend it to their fellow-men. The present attritions and shakings in the religious world, loudly call upon us to gird on the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, and to maintain the simplicity of gospel faith and practice, amidst the sallies of enthusiasm, the licentiousness of luke-warm christians, and the scoffs of open infidels. The greatness and difficulty of our work can prove no discouragement to us, if our hearts be warmed with the love of God. Let us think and act on the great scale of christian benevolence. Our private joys or sorrows must appear of small moment in comparison with faithfulness to our Lord, and the eternal interest of perishing mortals. The cause of heaven will stand, it will triumph over the ruins of time, and its glories will be unfolded in the presence of assembled worlds. To what greater honour can we aspire than to be found doing our Master's work, and waiting for the day when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.

My beloved Kinsman and Friend,

WHAT are your feelings on this occasion? You are now in a public and solemn manner to devote yourself to the service of God in the gospel of his Son. This is the noblest employment on this side heaven. The cause in which you have engaged is the cause of all good men, and of all holy beings in the Universe. You are called to labour in the

same field with the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and all the highly favoured servants of God, from the creation to the end of the world. Every step which you take will be followed with great and lasting consequences,—consequences which will out-live you and your dying hearers, and will extend into boundless eternity. Viewing yourself as a sinful worm of the dust, your heart must be filled with admiration at the divine condescension and grace. Considering yourself as acting on so broad a theatre, how must you be animated to fidelity and zeal!

FROM long and intimate acquaintance with you, I am led to hope that you have counted the cost of being a disciple and minister of Jesus Christ. On every recollection of that gracious providence which hath preserved you amidst the dangers of youth, and brought you to this important hour, you must feel constrained to testify your love to Christ, by feeding the sheep and lambs of his flock, by proclaiming the unsearchable riches of his grace to perishing sinners.

As a christian minister you are set for the defence of the gospel. You will be unworthy of your station if not able to contend earnestly for its divine original, and heavenly doctrines.—The clergyman of this age and country will have no deference paid him, if his abilities and manners do not command respect.

THE voice of reason and natural conscience proclaim that there is a God, the Creator and Governor of all things, and that mankind are bound to worship him. If public homage to the Deity were the creature of the politician, we should not have found it so early as the patriarchal ages. If the origin of all religion be attributed to priests, it may be replied, that they could not have persuaded mankind universally into a belief of some Deity, and their obligations to worship him, had there been no previous foundation laid for such belief and worship, in the human mind. All men will invoke some supreme power, when they feel themselves to be in danger, and despair of help from any created arm, in spite of their bravado or philosophy. In examining the various absurd religions which have found warm admirers among mankind, we are compelled to join the general la-

mentation over the race,—“how art thou fallen!” From hence the deduction of the most enlightened Pagan sages is obvious, that man stands in need of a supernatural guide. If the scriptures of the Old and New Testament be composed of jarring systems, they cannot demand our assent. But it will not follow that such is their matter because they do not lie fully open to our comprehension. To argue contradictions from the depth of subjects, is adopting a mode of reasoning which is exploded in every human science, because if admitted, it would land the studious in universal doubt, and check all the higher exertions of the mind. It cannot be thought strange that the mode of God’s existence, and his moral government, should be involved in mysteries to the view of creatures who are but of yesterday. It becomes the christian minister in reconciling the sacred books with themselves, to examine the different parts by the occasion and end of their delivery, with the helps to be derived from the age, state of improvement, and other circumstances of the nations or persons concerned. The friends of revealed religion have nothing to fear from a comparison of the Theology of Moses with that of Egypt. We may continue the comparison of scripture Theology as revealed at several periods, with that of Chaldea, Greece, or Rome, or with any religion which has been promulgated from the close of the Canon to the present time. The gospel must appear of infinite importance on account of the scheme of mercy which it contains; it opens a way for the acceptance of the guilty with an offended God, it affords a sure relief from despair, and teaches us to endure the troubles of life with patience and fortitude. Our divine teacher hath brought life and immortality to light, and hath assured his followers that the momentary afflictions of time will work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory in the world to come. He hath set them an example of purity, submission, patience and fortitude in life and death. Where can we behold these virtues in such lustre as in the life and ministry of the Son of God, in the garden of his agony, and the cross on which he poured out his soul unto death? The disinterested spirit which the gospel breathes demonstrates its perfect resemblance to its Divine Author, and furnishes a topic for argument which no skilful advocate will pass in silence. This source of evidence is permanent, and leads to conclu-

sions which are intelligible and convincing to persons of the smallest information. They must see, if not given up to the government of unruly passions, that such a religion could not be the offspring of the proud and selfish heart of man. Had the gospel been a cunningly devised fable, it could not have made its way in the face of the learning and power of the Roman Empire, while refusing to call to its aid the weapons of the Alexanders and Cæsars of the world. Blessed be God, the gospel yet lives, and will live, in opposition to all the powers of earth and hell, and will one day spread over the whole habitable globe, and carry light, peace, and liberty to nations now sitting in the shadow of death. Miracles were wrought to confirm its divine original in its infancy. The providence of God is proclaiming its divinity the present moment. Infidelity must have taken deep root in our hearts, if we can look on the present state of the descendants of Ishmael and Jacob, with other events before our eyes, and not acknowledge that the prophecies were given by Him to whom all things are known from the beginning of the world.

You must, my friend, esteem it a high priviledge to be a minister of this religion, and determine not to know any thing save Jesus Christ and him crucified. If the Son of God be nothing more than a creature, we cannot reconcile with his nature, the divine names, attributes, operations, and homage, given to him in the scriptures. The doctrine of the atonement, and the divinity of Christ, must stand or fall together. Explain both law and gospel in your preaching. None will come to Christ for salvation; unless previously convinced of the extent, rectitude and goodness of the divine law. Lay open the nature and demerit of sin, with the interminable punishment which awaits the impenitent, and warn sinners immediately to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel. Explain the nature, and inculcate the necessity, of regeneration, and bring up such rules of trial as shall separate between the wheat and the chaff in experimental religion. This will prove the most effectual method to destroy spiritual pride, to comfort those who have passed from death unto life, and to fasten conviction on the minds of all, that a title to the tree of life must be cleared by exercising every

grace, and practising every virtue, which compose the christian character. Abound in clear illustrations of all branches of evangelical truth and duty, addressed to the understandings, consciences and hearts of men. Exercise your office in all its branches with fidelity, and endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ under the numerous trials of the christian and ministerial life. When you are going to speak to your congregation, realize that you are to address immortal souls, that this season may be the last to some one present, and that it will be revived to his joy or confusion in the great day of the Lord. Such meditations will tend to give a fervor to your discourses which is not to be acquired by art, or the habits of profession. Pray for the divine blessing on your studies and public ministrations. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Under all discouragements, arising from want of present success, bear in mind, that many may recal your words to their everlasting joy when your body shall be mouldering in the dust; that the future reward will be proportioned to your fidelity, and that Christ will appear as a glorious conqueror when he shall stand on the earth the second time. Should you be favoured with a successful ministry, you will remember, that it may be attributed to the prayers, instructions and warnings of the Great and Good Man who went before you in this part of the vineyard,* not less, and perhaps much more, than to your own. But whoever be the instrument, all the glory is to be attributed to free, rich, and sovereign grace.

FINALLY, my dear Brother, be encouraged to labour and faint not. Live under clear and lively views of the eternal world, and of meeting your whole flock at the tribunal of Him who will judge the living and the dead. Hea-

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* THE REV. JOSEPH BELLAMY, D. D. the first Minister in this place: He died March 6th, 1790, in the 72d. year of his age, and 50th of his ministry. A short account of the character and extensive usefulness of this Great Man has been published in the Sermon delivered at his Funeral by the Rev. Mr. BENEDICT, of Woodbury, and in the Appendix subjoined by another hand.

ven and earth warn you to take heed to yourself and ministry. Behold these immortal souls committed to your charge! Could your illustrious predecessor speak to you from the church above, with what energy and pathos would he lift up his voice! The holy angels are witnessing to the solemn transactions of this day! But what is infinitely greater, THE LORD JESUS, who walketh in midst of the golden candlesticks, and holdeth the stars in his right hand, commands and promises from the throne of his glory, "*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life!*"

*My Brethren and Friends of this Church
and Congregation,*

YOU cannot refrain from mingling the tears of sorrow with the effusions of joy on this occasion. It revives the memory of your late venerable pastor, who rests from his labours, while it calls upon you to offer thanksgiving unto the God of all grace, that you are so soon and so happily united in the re-settlement of the gospel ministry. The eyes of the world will be upon the people of *Bethlem*, to observe their fruits, after sitting so long under one of the brightest luminaries of the age. Let your zeal for the faith and order of the gospel, and all branches of holy living, evidence that you have not been highly favoured in vain.

To launch out in praise of the man whom you have now chosen for your spiritual guide, would in me be suspected of partiality towards a favourite kinsman. My prayer is that he may justify your choice, prove a rich blessing to you and your dear children, long continue a helper of your joy, and be extensively useful in the church of God. Your duty and interest require that you relieve him as much as possible from cares foreign to his employment, and throw no hindrances in the way of his growth in christian knowledge. I need not inform you that he cannot be respectable in his profession, nor probably useful, unless he devote a large proportion of his time to study. Encourage him by being at peace among yourselves, and a steady attachment. Follow him wherein he follows Christ, and indulge no unchristian severity in your remarks upon his imperfections.

By mutual benevolent and friendly offices may you grow in each other's esteem, and your hearts be knit together in love. A deep concern for your souls, and for the honour of the christian religion, will impel you to know them who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion thy God reigneth!' Be importunate at the throne of grace that your pastor might come unto you in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ, that the word of the Lord might have free course and be glorified, and that a christian church and evangelical ministry might be continued here down to the second coming of Jesus Christ. May you keep the word of his patience, and be kept from the hour of temptation, "which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth," and at the close of a well spent life may you meet before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.

TO CONCLUDE—Let this whole assembly acquaint themselves with the nature, and feel the importance of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. "He is Lord of lords, and King of kings, and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful." Christ hath not a friend present, nor on the earth, who repents his dedication to him; nor an enemy, who will not soon become reconciled to his dominion, or reject the counsel of God against himself forever. The glory of that kingdom which employs the counsels of eternity, and the operations of time, will one day appear to all intelligent creatures, to their everlasting joy or confusion. Ye despisers of gospel grace, harden your hearts no longer, to-day hear the voice of the Son of God. Ye followers of the Lamb, patiently continue in well-doing, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh: "He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly."

Now, unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever and ever.

AMEN.

THE
C H A R G E,

BY LEVI HART, A. M.

Pastor of a Church in Preston.

THE ordination of christian ministers by prayer, and the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, is not less ancient than solemn. It is a religious consecration to the sacred office, by elders of the churches regularly called. According to the genius of the gospel, and the usage of the primitive church.

SIMILAR consecrations of persons devoted to God for his blessing, by holy men, may be traced in sacred history to the remotest antiquity.*

FROM the first institution of the christian church, this significant rite hath been applied to the ordination of evangelical ministers. The importance and solemnity of the work, evince the propriety of such a consecration, and suggest a weighty reason for *the charge*, which, from time immemorial has attended it, and which has constituted a part of the public solemnities.

DID the Apostle, with great solemnity, charge Timothy to exercise all good fidelity, in his work as a gospel minister?† We infer, with the utmost propriety, that succeeding ministers should receive a like charge, and transmit it to others.—To this part of the solemnities of the day we are now to proceed.

Dear and Reverend Sir,

YOU having been this day ordained a Bishop in the church of Christ, and a Pastor of this flock, agreeably to di-

* Gen. 48, 11—20. Numb. 27, 18—23. Deut. 34, 9.

† 2 Tim. 4, 1, 2—5.

vine rule, by prayer with the imposition of the hands of the presbytery;—the Lord Jesus Christ, chargeth thee to be a good minister in the church of God. To this end, you must live under a habitual dedication of yourself, to the services of Christ in this good work—"He that desireth the office of a Bishop, desireth a good work." By your deliberate choice, you are now set apart to these desired services. It is exceedingly important and sacred. You must therefore "keep yourself pure," by a life of strict religion and converse with God.—It is highly arduous and difficult: Far beyond the ability of the most eminent christian and Divine. A just view of it, will lead you to say with an Apostle, "Who is sufficient for these things?" You will need much of the divine strength and grace. This must be sought and obtained by the prayer of faith.

YOUR trials will be numerous and severe. You must "watch and pray lest you enter into temptation"—and may the prevalent intercession "pray for thee that thy faith fail not."—You are to preach and propagate a religion which consists in self-denial. You must therefore practise it yourself, and "be thou an example to the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity," and in all branches of the religion which you preach.—You are to preach a benevolent religion. Let it be exemplified in your life and manners. "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves."—In short, on a cursory view of ministerial duty, the field widens, and we are swallowed up in the greatness of the work, and the weight of the charge.—You will afford your serious attention to the following outlines of the work to which you are devoted.

You must preach the word of God, and "be instant, in season and out of season." "Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine." Declare to your hearers, "the whole counsel of God," and "keep back nothing which is profitable to them."—You must "teach them publicly, and from house to house."—You will feed the sheep and lambs of the flock—support the weak, comfort the feeble-minded—detect hypocrites, and warn the

harden'd, the impenitent, and unbelieving.—You will “study to approve yourself unto God, a watchman who needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”——You must diligently watch over the flock in which the Holy Ghost hath this day made you an overseer to “feed the church of God which He hath purchased with his own blood.”——You must lead this church in all the branches of brotherly love and christian discipline—You must faithfully administer the gospel sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper, to proper subjects, according to the word of God: And, when regularly called to serve other pastors, or churches, you will do it with readiness and fidelity. And, in the important service of ordaining christian ministers, you will lay hands suddenly on no man, but in the fear of God, to the best of your judgement,—“Commit these things to faithful, and well qualified men only—“who shall be able to teach others also.”

THAT you may be a good minister of Jesus Christ, you must live a life of watchfulness, of prayer, and communion with God, and give yourself to reading and study, that you may be “a scribe well instructed into the kingdom of God, and able to bring from the gospel treasure, things new and old.”——That you may discharge all parts of your duty with fidelity and success, as well others, as the particulars which have now been mentioned. Read frequently, and with practical attention, the holy scriptures in general, but especially, the descriptions of a good christian Bishop, drawn in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, and study, labour and pray much, to be that good christian Bishop.

THE work before you is exceedingly important. The souls of this people and of their children are committed to your charge, and you are to watch for them as one who is to give an account. If they perish through your unfaithfulness, their blood will be required at your hands; but if you are faithful, and the happy instrument of their final salvation, they will be your joy and crown in the day of the Lord Jesus.—“Endure hardness therefore as a good soldier of Jesus Christ;”—“be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might:”—“Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.”—You have much—very much, for your

encouragement—You are employed in the noblest work, under the best Master, and are invited to the noblest reward of fidelity—you are supported by the best examples, and animated by the most numerous and honourable assembly of spectators—You are engaging in that great design which has employed the talents and zeal of prophets, apostles and martyrs—of the wisest and best men in every age of the church—of the holy angels of heaven, who minister to the heirs of salvation, and of *the son of God*, the great “Author and finisher of our faith.” Surrounded as you are with such a cloud of witnesses, will you not “lay aside every weight, and run with patience the race before you?”

AMONG this numerous assembly of heavenly spectators, who can say how many “spirits of the just made perfect,” are looking on us?—The nature of the case—their known attachment to the church on earth, and to their christian friends below, together with many sacred passages, seem to authorise the solemn and supporting apprehension, that they visit the church, on offices of kindness, and are sent from their abodes in glory, on designs of benevolence.—If so, what multitudes of those blessed spirits may we suppose to be in this house of prayer, attending the solemnities of the day!—Among them, and more deeply interested than the rest, do you not perceive the spirit of your venerable predecessor, who laboured, watched and prayed for this people during the space of almost fifty years; and after being detained for a little more than three years between life and death, received his dismissal from the sorrows of mortality and ascended to glory. Had you known his deep concern for this people of his charge, as it was known to the speaker, and how earnestly he desired and prayed for a faithful and well qualified successor, and that the blessing of God might attend and crown his labours—You would readily conceive him, a joyful spectator of the present solemnity, in the prospect that his beloved people are receiving a Pastor, who will watch for their souls and be faithful to the death. O let such prospects be well founded, that there may be joy in heaven on this and many succeeding days, that the blessed gospel of the grace of God, is again daily proclaimed, and all the parts of the christian ministry again discharged in Beth-

lem, with wisdom and fidelity.—And in some distant period, in a good old age, may you be welcomed to the mansions reserved for those who have been faithful to the death.

FINALLY, we bid you a most affectionate farewell, and “charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and kingdom, that you observe these things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality;” and that you take heed to your ministry to fulfil it.

WE wish you the divine presence, and that your labours may be crowned with abundant success.

Now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work;—that when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you may be glad with exceeding joy, and receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away.

A M E * N.

THE

THE
RIGHT-HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

BY THE REVEREND
NOAH MERWIN.

Dear beloved Brethren;

WE behold you this day, with pleasure and satisfaction; united in one whom we trust comes to you in the fulness of the gospel of peace. We rejoice with you in your present union; which we view as a happy omen both of your profiting under his ministry, and of his being successful among you.—It is our hearts desire and prayer to God, that brotherly love may continue and greatly abound among you. We not only desire and pray for it; but shall ever act agreeable to the same, in readiness to afford you all that assistance and advice, which your circumstances may call for, and God may enable us to give—viewing ourselves equally engaged in the cause of our common Lord.

AND you, reverend and dear Sir, we own as a fellow labourer in the gospel of Christ: In testimony of which, we do now agreeable to that ancient and apostolic example, give you the right hand of fellowship—hereby declaring your equality with us as ministers of Christ,—and our just expectations of your help and assistance, when the cause of God, and the interest of the church of Christ, shall call for it.

OUR prayer to God is, that we may *keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace, till we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God*—That when we, who are ministers of Christ, cannot continue any longer by reason of death; and that last day shall come, when yonder globe of light shall be plucked from his sphere; turned into darkness, the moon into blood, and the stars of heaven shall fall; and the last trumpet's sound shall awake the dead.—We may meet our respective congregations at the right hand of our Lord and Judge—receive his approbation

as good and faithful servants—and have the people of our respective charges for our crowns of rejoicing : Which may God of his infinite mercy grant, for his—our people's—and our own sakes.



